

A Report to the 42nd District



Kelli Linville

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42nd District

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Appropriations

Environment Committee,
National Conference of State
Legislatures

Science, Energy, & Environ-
mental Resources Commit-
tee, National Conference of
State Legislatures

Pacific Northwest Fisheries
Legislative Task Force

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Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I'm grateful for the opportunity to send this report on issues in the Legislature. Although a budget disagreement kept us overtime, we have approved several other measures that impact Whatcom County citizens and other Washingtonians.

The strong economy provided a cushion of sorts against the lost revenue from Initiative 695. But we haven't adopted a long-term fix — just a bandage on the wound.

- Pipeline safety. We approved a measure to re-emphasize the safe and efficient operation of oil and gas pipelines.
- Good jobs. We approved legislation to promote sensible economic development in rural communities.
- Healthy environment. We approved a bill to improve water quality and public safety in the Lake Whatcom watershed.
- Strong schools. We approved a Better Schools Fund in the House that would strengthen our schools and better prepare students for tomorrow.
- Secure families. We approved proposals to restore the rights of citizens concerning their medical decisions, and to provide health-care coverage for more citizens.

Thank you again for your time today. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me whenever you have your own thoughts to share.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelli".

Kelli Linville
State Representative
42nd Legislative District

Representative Kelli Linville

◆ Pipeline safety:

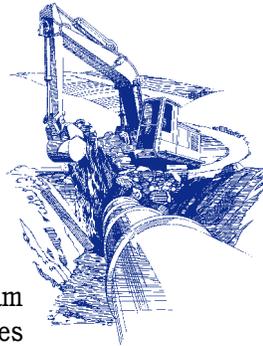
A renewed emphasis is placed on protecting citizens

Oil and gas pipelines are located in virtually every community all over the state. Even though they may be the safest way to move fuel, we must do a better job ensuring that safety.

One of the most important legislative actions taken this year will strengthen public-safety provisions in laws regarding pipelines. We must do a better job enforcing our “call before you dig” laws. The new policy provides a rapid shutdown of ruptured pipelines — as well as periodic inspection and testing, and continuing education and certification for pipeline operators.

By December 1 of this year, the state is required to develop a program of pipeline safety. Pipeline companies will submit operations-safety plans, and we will have a legislative proposal ready when additional pipeline-safety authority is provided by the federal government.

Even with federal delegation for our state to inspect, we need to continue to strengthen federal law, or get authority to inspect more rigorously.



inadequate bandwidth stunt the potential of public utility districts and ports in rural and small-town areas. The idea in the bill is to give them a tool to compete for development and diversity that they otherwise have little chance of getting.

Some rural classrooms have no interconnection with other classrooms. We've got to keep our classrooms wired so children are fully prepared for tomorrow's careers. This new law is a step toward meeting the goals of our K-20 education emphasis. Further, it responds to Initiative 695 by encouraging cost-effectiveness on the part of local governments.

We sent assistance to members of the business community, as well as Washington's other working men and women. The measure reforms the unemployment-insurance system and prevents a scheduled business-tax hike that would have hit 90 percent of the state's businesses.

The system also provides retraining assistance for dislocated workers who have lost their jobs for no fault of their own. The unemployment-insurance tax, which funds the retraining programs, had been set to go up. But it makes no sense to let the tax increase at a time when our economy is relatively strong and the unemployment-insurance system has a healthy reserve.



◆ Good jobs:

Boosting development in our rural communities

An important economic-development measure this year will allow public utility districts and rural port districts to provide telecommunications services. This plan is aimed at spurring economic development and diversification in Washington regions that aren't sharing Seattle's boom times.

Basic telephone and Internet services could be expanded to include access for the entire state, according to terms of the measure. The current lack of telecommunications capacity is a serious problem for local economic development and diversification. High-speed access and

◆ Healthy environment:

A big focus this year was Lake Whatcom water quality

The hard work and support of residents from Whatcom County's Sudden Valley community paid off this year when the Legislature approved a plan to strengthen public safety and water quality at Lake Whatcom. The lake provides water for 70,000 citizens in Bellingham and the county.



Landslides in the Sudden Valley area have killed one person and forced houses into the lake. This bill was

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necessary to protect unstable slopes — and to protect public safety and the quality of our drinking water. The measure directs the Department of Natural Resources to develop a landscape plan for state-owned forests in the Lake Whatcom area. The department will consult with local residents and people who own private forestland in the area.

Further, we included \$100,000 in the new state budget to help support the Lake Whatcom Management Committee in its efforts to prevent storm-water runoff into the lake.

I'm also continuing to work on the Dairy Nutrient Task Force to help develop recommendations for dealing with dairy waste. We must do all we can to meet state and federal clean-water laws protecting our water resources from pollution, and implement a plan that supports the dairy industry.

It's imperative that we emphasize cooperation in making sure that government works with dairy farmers and other businesses — not against them. We've got to review practical strategies for dealing with real-world problems.

Another significant action taken reinstates our Air Pollution Control Account with ongoing funds so we can preserve our air programs and our matching federal dollars.



◆ Strong schools:

Legislation is OK'd to improve education systems

We established the Better Schools Fund this year to make our good schools even better. It's so important that we close the skills gap in technical training that is essential for tomorrow's careers. Additional teacher-testing will also be implemented to make sure our students receive top-notch instruction.



A huge new provision in state policy will send tax relief to local taxpayers by increasing the state's share of the school-construction bill. We recognized a need to provide tax relief for citizens because the state had been reducing its support for building and repair projects.

I continue to support legislation to authorize public "charter schools" — an excellent strategy for encouraging parental involvement, fostering the professionalism of educators, and supporting our public-school mandate in the classrooms of Washington.

◆ Secure families:

Assuring the health-care rights of Washington citizens

An historic "Patients' Bill of Rights" was approved this year. The most important details in this new law emphasize your right to:

- Have information on what's included in a health plan before you buy it.
- Work with your doctor to make your medical decisions.
- Appeal insurance-company decisions.
- File suit against health-maintenance organizations.
- Protect the privacy of your medical records.

Unfortunately, approximately 10 percent of Washington citizens don't have any health insurance at all. Traditional private policies aren't even available in about 31 of our state's 39 counties. We passed an "individual market"

Representative Kelli Linville

bill, which is a first step to encourage more insurance companies to offer policies here. And we set up a high-risk pool to help provide coverage for citizens who can't get it now. We must evaluate the system to see whether it works to provide coverage for more citizens.

The Legislature also approved my proposal to arm consumers with better protection against wood-destroying pests — and better protection against unqualified pest inspectors.

The bill outlaws the practice of masquerading as a licensed structural-pest inspector. It also states that pest inspectors must be bonded or covered by insurance.

We also enacted a new policy directing that state agencies must not share sensitive, personal information about citizens — information that could be used for illegal purposes. No one will be allowed to review or copy credit-



and debit-card numbers, electronic-check numbers, card-expiration dates, and other types of financial information kept by state agencies.

The law regarding public records shouldn't be used by people who want to get their hands on private information.

Public records must be made available for public inspection and copying — that's what the law says now. But the key point in the new law is that personal informa-

tion shouldn't be considered a public record. When you supply an agency with this sort of information, you shouldn't have to worry that specific details about your financial life will fall into the wrong hands.

◆ Left undone:

More work remains for the 2001 Legislative Session

As co-Chair of the House Agriculture & Ecology Committee, I know there are several issues that need to be resolved in the next session.

High on the list are policies we just couldn't agree on this session:

- A consistent blueprint for protecting our water quality — providing clean water for people and fish.
- A reasonable policy for cleaning up Bellingham Bay and other urban harbors.
- A straightforward plan of action for preserving productive farmlands.
- A renewed emphasis on recycling as an important part of managing our waste.
- A strong mitigation standard for carbon-dioxide air emissions.

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